

## Unproductive Activities and Their Affecting Factors in Iran

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### Abstract

**Purpose-** Unproductive activities refer to economic activities which do not have a positive effect on GDP, but have high profit and returns, which can eliminate productive activities. This is a phenomenon that has occurred in Iran in the last three decades. The aim of the present study is to analyze the factors causing and spreading unproductive activities using Fumanat area as the context .

**Design/methodology/approach-** The study area is Fumanat, one of the historical regions of Gilan. The type of research is qualitative. In order to collect the required data and information, we conducted the various steps: First, using secondary data, the study illustrated changes in the share of employment in the economic sectors of the region, changes in the area of agricultural land use, as well as changes in the level of built land use. Second, conducting interviews with different business owners of each household, the common activities of households were studied to determine the evolution of productive activities in the sample villages. The common activities of households and among them unproductive activities were identified by inductive method. In order to understand the factors affecting the creation and expansion of unproductive activities, the qualitative approach of grounded theory was used .

**Findings-** The study indicates that in the mountain zone, 39.1 percent of jobs, in the foothill zone, 32.3 percent of jobs, in the plain zone, 41.9 percent of jobs and in the coastal zone, 30.2 percent of jobs, can be categorized as unproductive activities. The existence of uncertainty, lack of support for productive activities, the property rights issue, inadequate privatization and dysfunctional institution system affect the expansion of unproductive activities in the region.

**Originality/value-** Various studies have examined productive and unproductive sides in economic endeavors, most of which considered them with a macro point of view. The present study tries to investigate the contextually of the factors underlying these changes in a rural space and community.

**Keywords-** Uncertainty, Property right, Dysfunctional institution system, Unproductive activities, Fumanat.

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## 1. Introduction

Unproductive (non-productive) activity refers to activities that do not harm the process of economic growth and development if they are removed from the economic sphere. Rather, their removal helps to improve the economic stability. Such activities do not create real economic values and do not have a positive effect on GDP, despite having high income and returns. The International Labor Organization describes productive activities as endeavors that promote national economic competition. In contrast, activities that add nothing to GDP consider as unproductive activities whose growth depend on several factors in national and regional economies. After the experience of the 2008 financial crisis (Palley, 2013), industries and economic activities are assumed to be interrelated and the expansion of unproductive activities is associated with a decrease in productive activities (Ivashina & Scharfstein, 2010).

Due to the expansion of unproductive activities in the country, in 2011, almost half of the income is generated from economic activities without any actual value creation in Iranian households. This income is not from appropriate employment, but it is obtained through the purchase and sale of real estate, interest on bank accounts, the purchase and sale of gold and foreign currency and coins exchange, or other methods of trading. The rate was 49% in 2019 and now is increased to 63% in 2021, which show the unequal accumulation of capital and its socio-economic consequences.

Activities in the Iranian economy are divided into productive and unproductive ways. Productive activities have low profit and high commitment. Unproductive ones, however, are associated with high profitability and low commitment and unnecessary. These characteristics of the unproductive activities in the last decade have caused that private banks attract deposits and inject them into this means with high interest rates. From 1992 to 2014, land prices increased 10 times while the price index increased 54 times. As a result, many small businesses have turned their capital into money and deposited it in banks. Because the current interest rate in the non-productive sector (buying and selling gold coins, currency, land and housing) is not even comparable with the rate in the productive sector. In addition, the growth of unproductive activities has caused significant

changes at the national and regional levels (Shakeri, 2016). Hence, the spread of unproductive activities has disrupted the country's economic activities, and has challenged the motivation to work and build constructively and create wealth in the country.

Fumanat is one of the areas with the historical background which was the center of "Biah Pas" (west of Sefidrood River). This area was located in front of "Biah Pish" (east of Sefidrood) whose center is Lahijan. Today, Fumanat region is divided into three counties: Fuman, Someh Sara and Shaft. In the past, the economic equilibrium was established in the region and each area (coast, plain, foothill and mountain) used to have its own products to involve in the local and regional transaction. Now, many of the region's traditional products e.g. hemp and sugarcane with their processing industries are eliminated; others, such as silk and tea are active in declining condition while some new economic activities are expanding. In general, the distribution system of economic activities in the region, and thus the dispersion of the population has changed. The most important consequence of this is the weakening of productive activities, inability of competitive activities against unproductive activities, unemployment and migration to the suburbs of cities in the region or the country. As a result, many problems and sometimes heavy damages were followed.

The aim of the present study is to first conceptualize unproductive activities in rural areas of Fumanat. Afterwards, the volume and dimensions of unproductive economic activities in the area are demonstrated. Finally, the underlying factors for the expansion of such activities in the region are analyzed. Therefore, we attempted to answer the basic question of what factors have led to the spread of unproductive activities in the region. Unproductive activities hinder the development of a balanced regional economy, which is one of the current economic challenges in socio-economic systems. So, the analysis of barriers and the provision of corrective solutions can justify the current research.

## 2. Research Theoretical Literature

Numerous studies have examined the theoretical foundations of the creation and expansion of unproductive economic activities. Most of them studied the spread of unproductive activities from a macro and ecological perspective, and have

concluded that the development of productive activities undermines economic growth and national development. A group of researchers linked the owners of unproductive economic activities to "wealth-creating and rent-seeking entrepreneurs" (Baumol, 1996; Kirzner, 1997). Many believe that the existing and current institutional structures of society create constraints for the expansion of productive activities and at the same time provide incentives to expand non-productive activities (Henrekson & Sanandaji, 2011).

Baumol (1990) calls unproductive activity something that reduces the wealth and well-being of society. According to Kirzner (1997), productive activity increases efficiency and leads to the creation of positive externalities. Holcombe (1998) sees entrepreneurship as a productive activity because it expands the business environment. The research of Najarzadeh et al. (2012) entitled "the role of productive and unproductive entrepreneurship in economic growth" indicates that self-employment activities in the informal sector of the economy lead to tax evasion, which is considered unproductive activity. In a report in 2020 entitled "unproductive activities of competing production, some global experiences and strategies in Iran", the Parliament Research Center introduced examples of unproductive economic activities in five categories, which are: Making a profit from first, buying and selling of real estate (land, residential and commercial units), second, from gold, valuable metals trading (coins and ingots), third, from foreign currency transactions, fourth, from bank deposits and fifth, from the intermediation and distribution of goods. According to the report, any activity with the intention of generating income, profit or any kind of benefit that increase national production by creating added value is productive, while any activity that creates profit or benefit for individuals, but at macro level, does not create added value and does not increase national production, is unproductive. Economic activities are different in terms of added value. Some activities lead to the production of goods or services, hence benefit. Some other activities are merely the distribution of income from one person to another and do not add any value to industrial, agricultural or service products. For example, making a profit from buying and selling real estate

(except for delivery services) does not create added value or production, but it can be profitable for housing traders. Sometimes these activities have low risk and high profit so they attract the capital, which could be used in production. Abbas Shakeri (2014) believes that unproductive activities play a restrictive role in the economy and cause the despair of productive factors.

Productive activities create positive externalities, i.e. they reduce ancillary costs but unproductive activities cause negative externalities and increase ancillary costs. Exploiting natural and human resources, unproductive activity causes inflationary recessions in the economy (Shakeri, 2016: 171). According to Olson (1982), there is a positive relationship between the weakness of laws and the creation and growth of non-material activities in economy.

Recognition of unproductive activities is inductive and can be identified from the effects of this type of economic activity. Therefore, unproductive activities cannot be defined by a fixed formula, but they are defined and identified on a comparative means based on the role they play in society and national production. Similar activity may be productive in one place and unproductive in another. Retail and wholesale are necessary and productive provided that they are in the service of production. When they become so large so that they take production into their own control, they become unproductive. Financial service is productive in essence if it is to equip funds for production and reduce the cost of risk. It is unproductive when it engages in extensive financial activities unrelated to production and helps create risk instead of reducing risk costs. In other words, if banking activity is a central institution, facilitator and enabler of the production system, and uses limited resources optimally, it is a productive activity, but if it attracts people's deposits at a high rate and injects it into unproductive activities, it is considered as an unproductive activity. Trade as a productive activity causes power of production and supply. It does not prolong the process of production to consumption, and it is based on absolute or comparative advantage and economies of scale. On the other hand, it is a restriction to production as an unproductive activity (Shakeri, 2016: 167-187). Service, including educational, health, commercial and welfare services, support production and their

role is essential. Obviously, activities that damage the productive strength of society and its environment cannot be considered productive activities.

This type of activity has a high return and it takes productive activities out of the economic cycle due to competition. Furthermore, it prevents the accumulation of physical and human capital, and technological improvement in the productive sector, and undermine the incentives of productive activities. When unproductive activity dominates a society and makes the process of productive activity difficult or limited, it leads to the development of meaningless, destructive, and thus production activities elimination. As a result, production remains to the extent of subsistence level, along with unintended economic, social and spatial consequences.

Economic change and the expansion of different types of employment are attributed to different factors from various scientific perspectives. According to Douglas North, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, economic change results from transformations in human communities quantitatively and qualitatively, stock of knowledge and institutional framework (North, 2005: 1-2). The institutional structure, or in other words, the accumulated beliefs of society over time consist of the political and social structure, and property rights. Political structure defines the way in which political choices are made, the structure of property rights defines formal economic incentives, and informal incentives in economics are explained by norms and customs or social structure.

For economic geographers, institutions are seen as conduits to reduce the cost of local transactions. In general, there are three types of approaches to institutions in economic geography. These three types of institution evaluations included: Rational choice institutionalism that seeks to increase productivity by creating specific organizational forms in specific institutional environments. Sociological institutionalism that investigates social processes, networks, and commitments by examining collective interpretive frameworks. Finally, historical institutionalism that contributes to our understanding of the evolution of institutional structures throughout history (Martin, 2003).

In the view of relational economic geography, economic action, and its evolution is based on three propositions. Contextuality - economic factors function structurally in the context of social and institutional relations. Path dependency - in terms of dynamism contextually provides path-dependent development because economic decisions in past affect the action of today and future. Contingency - economic trends, despite path-dependent development, are subject to unpredictable change, and they operate essentially in an open system (Bathelt & Glückler, 2003: 117-144).

In this view, resources use (including material resources, knowledge, power and social capital) is also analyzed within social, institutional, political and economic relations and at a collective level. Furthermore, they affect each other in terms of efficiency and outcome (Bathelt & Glückler, 2005).

Scholars who have studied the relationship between culture and economic change are in several groups of as market-oriented, historian, and institutionalist. Market orientation believes that culture sometimes hinders economic change, meaning that certain institutions, such as extended families or caste systems in India or Hindu refusal to kill animals, may impede the efficient allocation of resources in developing economies. Adversely, they sometimes ignore the role of culture in economic transformation. According to Frederick List, one of the supporters of the historical school, the sense of self-esteem and sense of belonging to the country among a nation and the tendency to virtue and avoidance of corruption, depends on the productive strength of any society as a system of collective life (Need to be checked According to him, capital of mind as the source of innovation for the nation together with other forms of capital make a nation prosperous (Levi-Faur, 1997).

Among Institutionalists, Acemoglu and Robinson (2016) stated that any changes that occurs in technological production and leads to the improvement of production capacity will leave inevitable effects on the cultural behaviors and beliefs of the society. Thus, economic developments have a more significant effect on cultural developments. Oliver Williamson considers the effects of culture on the levels of macro and micro development to be crucial. Hajun Chank states there is a mutual interaction between

economics and culture, even though economic development is not subject to a cultural revolution. Because economic development, which means improving productivity, in some extent creates the culture that needs it. Douglas North believes that culture in its basic function is a decisive element in the formation of the motivational structure of society, and it forms the system of beliefs and institutions. These will form the motivational structure, determine the direction of knowledge acquisition, generate channels of personal interest, and finally create organizations appropriate to the institutional structure (North, 1990, p. 42-43).

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Geographical Scope of the Research

The spatial territory of the studied area consists of the historical region of Fumanat, in the north of Iran and the southeast of the Caspian Sea. The average annual precipitation in the area is 1300 mm, the average annual temperature is 7.5 °C and its soil varies from alluvial to soft and black forest soils. The vegetation of the area includes Caspian Hyrcanian forests and natural mountain pastures that human-driven deforestation is transparent in their landscape.

Fumanat is one of the areas with the historical background, which is the center of "Biah Pas" (west of Sefidrud) in Fuman County. This area was located in front of "Biah Pish" (east of Sefidrood) whose center is Lahijan. Today, Fumanat region is divided into three counties: Fuman, Someh Sara and Shaft.

In the past, the economic equilibrium was established in the region, so each zone (coast, plain, foothills and mountains) used to have its own products to engage in the local and regional transaction. Now, many of the region's traditional products e.g., hemp and sugarcane with their processing industries are eliminated. Others, such as silk and tea are active in declining condition while some new economic activities are expanding. In general, the distribution system of economic activities in the region and consequently the dispersion of the population has changed. The most important consequence of which is the weakening of productive activities, inability of competitive activities against unproductive activities, unemployment and migration to the suburbs of cities in the region or the country. As a result, many problems and sometimes heavy damages were followed.

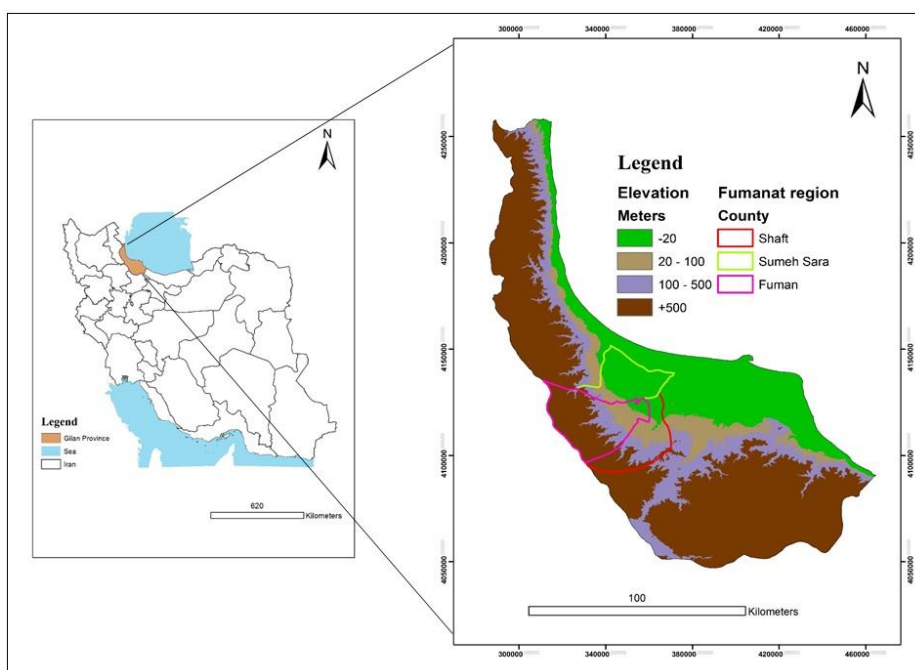


Figure 1. Location of the study area with emphasis on the elevation zoning



### 3.2. Methodology

The research is a qualitative method in terms of methodology. In order to collect the required data and information first, using secondary data, we identified changes in the share of employment in the economic sectors of the region (Table 2), changes in the area of agricultural land use (Table 3), as well as changes in the area of built-up land use (Table 4). In order to collect field information, all rural settlements in the area (403 villages) were divided into four types of coast, plain, foothill and

mountain in terms of physical features and prevailing livelihood. In the coast zone, hunting and fishing are part of the livelihood of farmers. The plain zone is characterized by the dominant rice cultivation. In the foothill zone, a combination of rice cultivation and husbandry is evident, and finally, the mountain zone is a place for ranchers. 25 villages were selected as the sample villages. The villages consisted of 5,780 households, 236 of which selected among different zones using the Cochran method. Table 1 illustrates the sample villages of the research.

**Table 1. Sample villages**

Source: Statistics Center of Iran 1996 & 2011

Areas	Height (meters)	Inhabited settlements	Number of samples	Total households	Sample households	Village
Coast	Less than 20	25	3	1083	44	Baqlakesh - Handeh Khaleh - Siah Darvishan
plain	From 20 to 100	196	10	2799	114	Zaideh Paen- Shirzil- Rudpish- Gol Afzan Gasht - Kordabad - Send - Khatib Gurab - Shekal Gurab - Pish Hesar
Foothill	100-500	84	6	1425	58	Darbagh - Ghal-e-Rudkhan- Heidarlat - Shulem - Gaskereh - Abroud
Mountain	More than 500	98	6	473	20	Lat- Visrud- Zodel- Koryeh-Zardalgeh- Taleghan
Total	-	403	25	5780	236	

We conducted interviews with different business owners of households in the selected villages, the common activities of households were identified (Table 5). The number of activities is not the same as the number of households because the number of employed individuals in different households was different. The identification of unproductive activities is inductive, so we separated productive and unproductive activities inductively. Sometimes it is necessary to know its instance, but it is necessary to

know its features and effects (Shakeri, 2016: 164). In order to identify the factors affecting the creation and expansion of unproductive activities, we use the qualitative approach of grounded theory (Allan, 2003: 1-10).

## 4. Research Findings

### 4.1. Changes in the share of employment in economic sectors

Table 2 illustrates the share of employment in activity groups by cities and selected economic sectors of the region.

**Table 2. The share of employment in activity groups and selected economic sectors of the region**

Source: Statistics Center of Iran 1996 & 2011

County	Year	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Hotels and restaurants	Financial intermediaries	Real estate and renting	Education
Shaft	1997	60.1	8.9	5.3	1.0	0.2	0.3	3.7
	2011	49.7	0.5	8.5	8.4	0.6	2.9	1.4
15 years range		-10.4	-8.4	+3.2	+7.4	+0.4	+2.6	-2.3
Someh Sara	1997	56.5	8.0	2.7	1.1	0.5	0.6	6.7
	2011	44.5	0.9	11.1	8.9	1.2	4.2	2.0
15 years range		-12	-7.1	+8.4	+7.8	+0.7	+3.6	-4.7
Fuman	1997	53.5	15.4	3.9	1.0	3.0	0.2	5.6
	2011	42.4	1.0	9.9	8.7	0.8	4.4	2.0
15 years range		-11.1	-14.4	+6	+7.7	+0.5	+4.2	-3.6

Based on the data in Table 2, in the period of 15 years 1996-2011:

A. The changes in the employment in the three cities of the district (Sumeh Sara, Shaft and Fuman) are almost the same.

B. The share of agricultural workers in the area has decreased by an average of 11.16 %.

C. The share of industrial workers in the area has decreased by an average of 9.97 %.

D. The employees in education sector in the area has decreased by an average of 11.16 %.

E. The share of employees in construction sector has increased by 5.87 %.

F. The employees in the hotel and restaurant sector has increased by an average of 7.63 %.

G. The employees in the financial intermediary sector has increased by an average of 0.53 %.

H. the ratio of employees in real estate and renting sector has increased by an average of 3.46 %;

The data shows a decrease in the amount of employment in all productive sectors during this period in contrast, in non-productive sectors it faced a significant increase.

#### 4.2. Changes in the area of agricultural land use

**Table 3. Changes in the area (hectares) of agricultural land use in a 30-year period from 1987 to 2017**

Source: Agricultural Census Data 1987 and 2017

County	1987	2017	Change in hectares	Change in percentage
Shaft	22285	22871	586	+2.6
Sumeh Sara	53166	52346	-820	-1.5
Fuman	27908	25443	-2465	-8.8
Total	103359	100660	-2699	-2.6

According to the data in Table 3, in the 30-year period of 1987-2017, the amount of 2699 hectares or 2.6 percent of the area under agricultural use has been reduced. Therefore, the production area for agriculture has decreased, and instead, the number of unproductive activities has been increased, which will be discussed later.

Even though the production techniques in the region have transformed, rice production doesn't show a significant difference from 100 years ago. In fact, the yield of rough rice remains the same amount of 4 tons/hectare (1.2 ton/hectare white rice) while this amount is 3 times less than Turkey (Afrakhteh, 2017:146-152). That is why the net income of rice yield per hectare in 2019 didn't go higher than 70 million Rials. In 2020, untimely raining in the harvest season caused a lot of damage. The daily wage of the workers rose to six million Rials. As a result, rice cultivation is not economically viable. The trend of decline and stagnation of economic activities is also observed in other common productive activities of the region, namely tea cultivation, breeding and animal husbandry.

Iranian tea production in Fumanat has gone through a complicated process (Afrakhteh, 2018: 152-163). Due to privatization plan, the amount of tea production in the area decreased by 60%. Due

to privatization plan, the amount of tea production in Fumanat decreased by 60%.

Silk cocoons production has seen the same deteriorating process (Afrakhteh, 2018: 163-174). This makes silk farmers lose their interest in silk production as it reduced from 5,400 tons in 2000 to 923 tons in 2016. The number of employees of Iran Silk Joint-Stock Company is reduced from 400 to 14, and the Kasma Village Silk Weaving Factory in Fumanat area is shutdown now.

Livestock breeding in the region achieved prosperity in various forms in the past (Pourfikoei 1978; and Bazen 1989), but due to the dominance of the traditional method, and insignificant income, it has been declined dramatically (Afrakhteh, 2018: 174- 177). In 2020, the outbreak of crimean congo haemorrhagic fever caused a lot of damage to farmers. The two traditional crops of sugarcane and tobacco are restricted in the Someh Sara area. All these data show that productive activities in the area are experiencing a drastic reduction.

#### 4.3. Changes in the area of built-up land use

Table 4 shows the changes in the area of built-up land use in the Fumanat area. During this period, 1581 hectares or 137 percent, has been added to the built-up land in the area. A local survey shows that an average of 17.8 percent of these built-up lands consists of second homes, villas and houses

constructed by affluent urban residents in rural areas. That is to say, the less conversion of land use

for production, the more unproductive residential and service land use.

**Table 4. Changes in the area of built-up land use in a 30-year period from 1987 to 2017 (in hectares)**

Source: Statistics book of the province, 1987 and 2017

County	1987	2017	Change in hectares	Change in percentage
Shaft	415	575	160	38
Sumeh Sara	415	1280	865	208
Fuman	324	880	556	172
Total	1154	2735	1581	137

#### 4.4. Type of employment in terms of sample villages in different types of zones

Table 5 shows the common type of employment in the region in different types of mountain, foothill, plain, coast zones.

**Table 5. Employment in the Various areas of Fumanat**

areas	Occupation	Number	Percent	Unproductive percentage
Mountain	Animal husbandry	7	25	-
	Agriculture	3	10.7	-
	Slaughterhouse worker	2	7.1	7.1
	Restaurant worker	3	10.7	10.7
	Shopkeeper	4	14.2	14.2
	day laborer	3	10.7	-
	Carpenter	1	3.7	-
	Driver	1	3.7	-
	Employee	2	7.1	-
	Livestock middlemen	2	7.1	7.1
	Total	28	100	39.1
Foothill	Employee	6	9.2	-
	Agriculture	16	24.6	-
	Teacher	7	10.8	-
	Military	5	7.8	-
	Seller of construction materials	7	10.8	10.8
	Butcher	2	3.1	3.1
	Manual worker	6	9.2	-
	Tire dealer	2	3.1	3.1
	Driver	1	1.5	-
	Barber	1	1.5	1.5
	Coffee shop	2	3.1	3.1
	Billboard design	1	1.5	1.5
	Financial intermediaries	3	4.6	4.6
	Shopkeeper	3	4.6	4.6
	Post Bank teller	2	1.3	-
	Gasoline seller	1	1.5	-
	Total	65	100	32.3
plain	Agriculture	26	8.7	-
	Animal husbandry	3	1	-
	Grocery	14	4.7	4.7
	automobile repair shop	16	5.4	-
	Itinerant vendor	4	1.3	1.3
	Governmental Employee	15	5	-



areas	Occupation	Number	Percent	Unproductive percentage
	Military	22	7.4	-
	Teacher	16	5.4	-
	restaurant worker	32	10.7	10.7
	Coffee shop and barber shop	14	4.6	4.6
	Real estate dealer	10	3.4	3.4
	Clock smith and radio repair	7	2.3	-
	Stationery	6	2	2
	Photography	1	0.3	-
	Driver	5	1.8	-
	Simple worker	27	9	-
	House builder	18	6	-
	Industry	6	2	-
	Real estate dealer	12	4	4
	Taxi	24	8.6	8.6
	Baker	5	1.8	-
	businessperson	4	1.3	1.3
	Computer services	3	1	-
	Post Bank	4	1.3	1.3
	Gas station worker	3	1	-
	Total	297	100	9.41
Coastal	Agriculture	18	16.5	-
	Animal husbandry	8	7.4	-
	Fisherman and hunter	12	11.1	-
	Driver	5	4.6	4.6
	Sales person (grocery-coffee shop-barber shop)	9	8.2	8.2
	Baker	2	1.8	-
	Restaurant and Tourism	19	17.4	17.4
	Manual worker	8	7.3	-
	Employee	9	8.3	-
	Military	7	6.4	-
	Teacher	7	6.4	-
	Industry	5	4.6	-
	Total	109	100	30.2

According to local and inductive evaluation, in the mountain area 39.1 %, foothill 32.3 %, plain 41.9 % and the coastal area 30.2 % of jobs were estimated unproductive jobs. The plain area has the highest number of unproductive jobs because the population of this area, due to its proximity to the urban centers of the area, has had less migration. People in this area provided business around their settlements while the young population in mountain, foothill and coastal areas, due to local

restrictions, have migrated to the urban centers of the region to search for jobs.

#### ***4.5. Effective factors in creating and expanding unproductive activities***

To find the factors that create and expand unproductive activities, we obtained various statements through interviews with business owners in sample villages. Some quotations and related concepts and themes are shown in Table 6. These statements have been analyzed using the grounded theory approach.

**Table 6. Statements about factors affecting the expansion of unproductive employment using grounded theory**

Statement	concepts	Themes	Major theme
As long as the product is still in our hands, the price is very low. When the price rises we have the product no longer.	Economic uncertainty	Uncertain environment	Uncertain atmosphere
When selling livestock, livestock middlemen are all united and buy them from us at the cheapest price.			
Agricultural work has no end result.			
Production work has thousands blind knots, a wise person does not go close to it.			
Agricultural work is very hard and its income is very unstable and insignificant			
When you have an agricultural or livestock product, you have to curry favor with buyers on the other hand, you have to curry favor to provide tools and needs, too.			
I have been farming rice for 10 years, and spent all that money and effort. one year it was burned, another year it was rotted and another time it was destroyed by the pest.	Natural uncertainty	Production is not economically competitive	Weak support for productive activities
Any work related to a living thing, whether plant or animal, is dangerous and risky			
No one knows you these days when you get in trouble.	Social uncertainty		
The farmer must always work. no pension and no insurance.			
The cost of mixed-livestock is not commensurate with its income.	Livestock is not economically viable		
The price of bran and fodder is increasing steadily; veterinary medicines are becoming more expensive every day. Our cost cannot be met by this price for selling milk. Selling livestock also has its own problem.			
This year, we had a disease in our cows. The medicine was so expensive and it was all loss.			
Some of my classmates went to Tehran. I stayed here and continued farming. They now come by truck. I am old here empty-handed.	Agriculture is not economically viable		
Cultivate one hectare of land, you do not earn 15 million a year, Start a cafe, you earn 15 million per month.			
No farmer could go to Mecca instead they go to Mashhad was on loan [as a pilgrimage trip].			
Agricultural earnings and expenditure do not balance.			
The farmer has no peace.	Hard work of traditional agriculture		
Agriculture is always miserable			
The rancher work day and night no resting, but the worker sleeps comfortably at least at night.			
The young generation is not looking for agricultural work. We are tired too			
Today, if you hire a person (worker), it must be either old people or people with disabilities.	Lack of job attraction in animal husbandry		
There is no economic efficiency in small land size agriculture. You need others to help you for plowing, transplanting, harvesting, threshing, transportation, and because there are a lot of requirements for tools in the work season, operators do not do a good job. In fact, they ask for a lot of money.	Small units are not economically viable		
Income of small-scale agriculture is not compatible with today's cost of living			

Statement	concepts	Themes	Major theme
Employee means begging, after 30 days you get money that is lost within 5 days, you have to suffer for another 25 days miserly	An employee has almost no income	Formal activities are not economically competitive	
I was a sweeper in the hospital. When I got married, I could not rent a house with the salary	Worker wages are very low		
If you work as a worker, you have to live for eight hours, you get 200 thousand Tomans, which ends with bread, butter, sugar and tea, the job is not even every day.			
Business, today, is the best thing if the goods are not sold, the price goes up	Inflation has led to high profits for tradings	Financial intermediary has a high income	
Trading is always blessed, you can sell at a profit and at any price.			
Due to inflation, sales are profitable.	Land trading is thriving and profitable		
If you buy land, then get a construction permit, the price will increase 10 times.			
There are a thousand organizations to prevent the high price of little things such as candy, but there is no organization to prevent the high price of land and housing.			
Land trading today is a lucrative business.			
The income is good for restaurants.			
The prevalence of building second homes and more is the main source of purchasing building materials and profits of material providers			
30% of buildings that can be used for reconstruction are being destroyed			
Locals build houses as well as immigrants, which has boosted the sale of building materials			
Self-employment is good, you have your own choices and considerable income.	Informal activity has a high income		
When I was a farmer, I never had the money to raise my child sufficiently			
If I did something else (other than what you call illegal) I could not own a car for the rest of my life			
Whatever I did, I did not find a job, I had to work with this car	Lack of work in the public sector	Labor market recession	
There is no work here, you just can find a job in the cities, but they pay a maximum of one and a half million, with which you cannot even rent a room.			
I went to university to study and after all I got no job. I had to open this shop (selling CDs) to be busy	Lack of work in industry sector		
In our house, four of us are all engineers, we all paid for them, but they are unemployed			
In the past, this area was a textile factory, people were working, now it is closed			
Chuka (paper) factory used to hire employees, but now it is not recruiting			
The closed Fumanat textile factory is currently closed			
The closed Kasma silk industry is not currently hiring.			
If I do not smuggle, what can I do?			
In the past, tea factories used to recruit from spring to autumn, but now it is very low			
Graduates cannot do everything	Believe in clerical jobs	A culture of disregard for work	
Even low-paid jobs for public sector is good			
If I could work as a public servant, I would close my cafe today.			

Statement	concepts	Themes	Major theme
Even God knows intermediary money legitimate (Halal)	Transaction intermediary is an acceptable activity		
It has long been said that merchant is the beloved of God			
Buying and selling land is not worse than selling drugs			
In trading, you may gain not much money, but you are comfortable	Embracing easy work		
Shopping of any kind, even if the income is low, is good. Your body is comfortable			
Driving earns cash			
Livestock is not cost-effective at all. We keep these few livestock so that our rangelands won't be taken away from us.	Fear of losing pasture ownership	Weak property rights	Weak property rights
We were a company worker (temporary contract). After a while, we got redundancy dismissal.	Temporary contract	Ministry of Labor policy	Privatization
What should I do when no one is seeking production for the country?	Neglect national interest	Institutional malfunctioning system	Institutional malfunctioning system
Serving the country is an obsolete and meaningless concept.			
Nobody appreciated us when we did something good and lawful	Productive work is not encouraged		
They all smuggle and have never been persecuted.	It's not any responsibility in an informal job		
Now the money is contaminated, obtaining lawful (Halal) no longer makes sense	Receding the ugliness of unauthorized work		
Everyone who does something wrong is powerful now and laughs at our face.			
When everyone is struggling to make money why shouldn't I? The life is expensive especially when you are ill.	Earn money at any price		
After all, living needs money, you have to provide for it. You can't achieve satisfaction by just saying the word.			

Based on the findings of the grounded theory, there are five main factors in the creation and development of unproductive activities in the affected area, which are:

First, **an atmosphere of uncertainty** that has prevented the development of productive activities in three ways.

A. Natural uncertainty that the area requires the necessary technology and infrastructure to reduce natural damage to agricultural products. Specifically, in this region, rice fields and other crops are being destroyed because of unpredictable out of season rainfall, drought and pests. In the crop year 1398-1399 (2019-2020), about 30% of rice fields were completely destroyed due to untimely rain and storms. In the same year, because of spring hail, all plums were destroyed;

B. Economic uncertainty, which means that the pricing system, producer and consumer protection is in a state of confusion, and changes in the prices of agricultural products and the marketing system detrimental to the producer. In 2019, rice was purchased from the producer for 120 thousand Rials and traded in the market at a price of 200 thousand Rials. In 2019, rice was purchased from the producer for 120 thousand Rials and traded in the market at a price of 200 thousand Rials.

C. Self-employed farmers and ranchers often lack the necessary social and insurance support and, as they say, "We have to work as long as we live". When their agricultural and livestock products are damaged by natural or economic factors, or when the farmers are old and disabled, they will surely fall into poverty. Self-employed and low-income

farmers are not able to independently buy agricultural machinery (tillers, tractors, planters, harvesters, threshers, etc.). As a result, during the working season, they need to deal with all kinds of intermediaries who try to exploit the farmer.

Second, the **lack of support for productive activities** can be addressed in five ways:

A. Agricultural and animal husbandry activities are not economically competitive and cannot attract active labor, and this is due to various issues. The average production is insignificant and the traditional exploitation method contains both hard work and low efficiency. The average of a production unit's area for the dominant cultivation (self-employment rice cultivation) is about a half of a hectare and the average production per hectare is four tons of rice per year.

Livestock farming is also traditional and according to Afrakhteh (1993) is declining. This type of activity relies on grazing natural pastures plus additional fodder in winter, which requires high maintenance, nutrition, medicine and treatment costs. On the other hand, limited livestock production in addition to livestock purchases monopoly by livestock middlemen, who exploit the smallholders.

B. For the reason of the special situation of the country, the labor market is facing a recession. Unemployment in the region is officially 12.7 %, on the other hand, the minimum wages in the public, and service sectors do not meet the needs due to the prevalence of inflation. At the same time, availability of productive activities in Iran is restricted. Iran's ranking is 128th out of 190 countries on the ease of doing business (The World Bank Group, 2019). In contrast, unproductive activities do not require high expertise and capital, neither do they face various administrative and tax barriers. They make even a lot of profit especially informal and unauthorized ones.

C. Avoiding work attitude is also common in the area, which is against productive activities and prompts unproductive activities. This issue is rooted in history. Charles Issawi (1971: 56) says that "Iranians have an inclination for intermediary businesses, and in the economy they act as if they were born merchants and traders", an issue that intensifies migration to the suburbs and doing unproductive activities. Harvard advisory Group (1951-1958) argued that Iranians invest more in

land and buildings, and this is a competitor to industrial investment (McLeod, 1964).

Third, the **property rights issue** is one of the most important factors hindering productive activities in Iran. The property rights index is 4.579, and Iran ranks 103th among 129 countries (International Property Rights Index, 2019). According to Azizolahi (2018), one third of the country's court cases is land lawsuits. In many cases, the extent of public ownership is unclear, and this gap has provided an opportunity for land grabbing (even mountain and forest grabbing) for some dealers. This is indicated when one engages in side activities in order to guarantee one's land ownership rather than increasing the land capacity. Fourth, **inadequate privatization** incompatible with the social and economic conditions of the region, which is another factor in the spread of unproductive activities in the region. On the one hand, the implementation of a temporary employment contract reduces the motivation of the worker and the employee to work, and on the other hand, the lay-offs have been joining the group of employees in unproductive activities.

Fifth, the **dysfunctional institution system**

Institutions provide structures to reduce uncertainties and structuralize the hidden incentives in human transactions (Rezaghali, 2019). Institutions are comprehensive which encourage development, and sometimes for various historical, social, economic, and political reasons, they do not have a developmental function, thus they become "dysfunctional." The clearest form of institutional structures can be found in the thought of Parsons and Merton. The work of this school of thoughts is tied to the concept of function (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017: 313).

The meaning of the dysfunctional institution structure has two components in consistence with theoretical support:

First, the direction of knowledge acquisition: a dysfunctional institution structure is a context that leads the direction of knowledge acquisition to methods of deception and corruption and rewards this mode of learning. Conversely, the type of knowledge that develops the country and creates prosperity is discouraged.

Second, formation of self-interest: the dysfunction institution structure, acts in such a way that individuals in the path of maximizing their own



benefits, damage long-term and national development interests (Momeni, 2020). The function of this institution structure in Fumanat region is that people do not pay attention to national and long-term interests; productive work

is not encouraged; informal economy is not questioned; doing illegal work is not an immoral effort, and earning is at a survival level. As a result, unproductive activities are leading to elimination of productive activities.

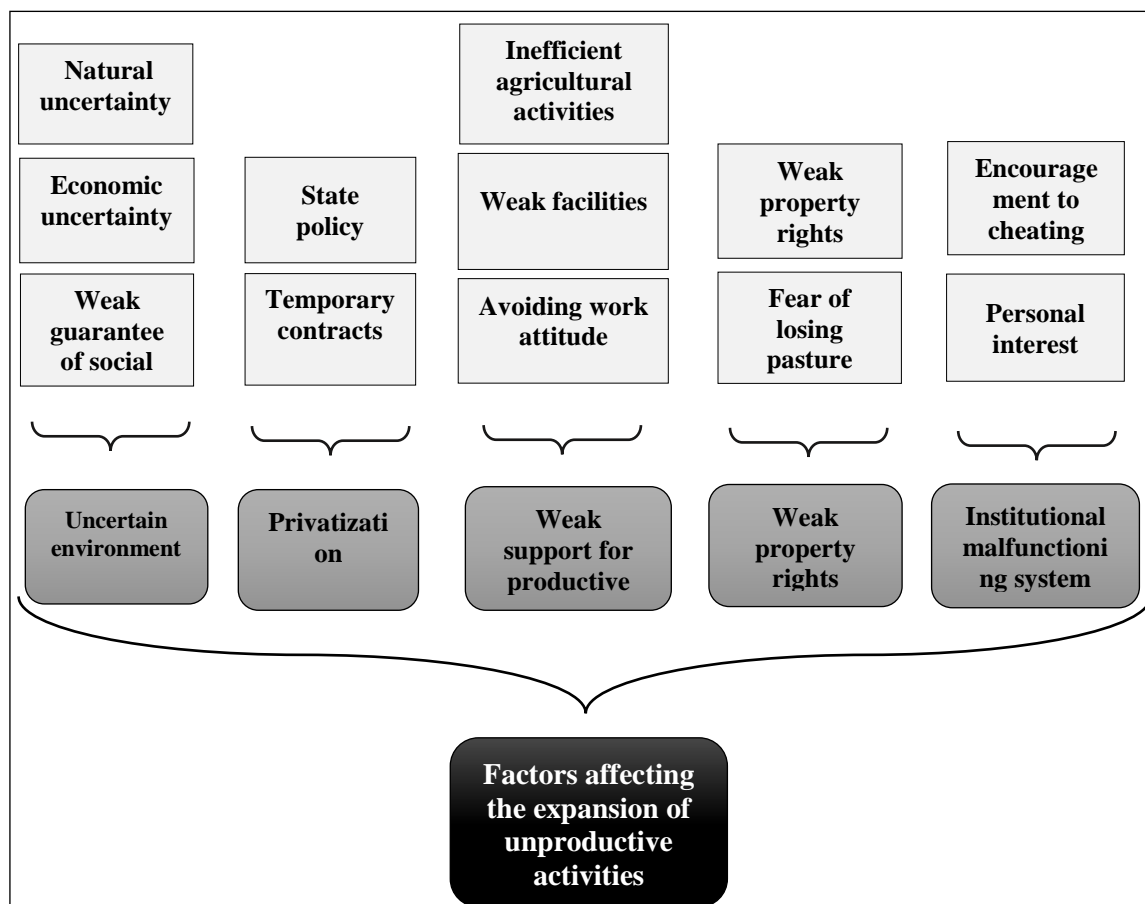


Figure 2: Factors for the expansion of unproductive activities in the area

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Productivity is an important indicator and necessity of economic growth. Economic activities can be considered productive or unproductive in terms of resource allocation and its consequences for the society. Social consequences have increasingly been one of the main market concerns (Fanti & Buccella, 2020). We studied these activities in a framework of a rural area and the current status of economic activities in this area.

The study showed that the spread of unproductive activities in the region lies in poor production and low efficiency. Most of those living in poverty are farmers and ranchers who are always busy. Conversely, those with a good income and a more prosperous life are coffee shop owners and market

owners. John Foran mentioned that at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the production gap between the strongest country and the weakest country was at last three to one. At Safavid era in Iran, the distance between Iran and France was between 30 to 50 percent, but after the Industrial Revolution, this distance has increased greatly (Foran, 2007). According to David Lands (2005), the gap between the income per capita of countries at the beginning of the first wave of the Industrial Revolution reached to an unprecedented difference of 400 to 1. The data imply the difference between the efficiency of modern and traditional production methods. The traditional method of production, in addition to coercive hardship on producer, has little efficiency.

Low efficiency and income will limit the possibility of constructive cultural change. According to an earlier study carried out based on [Maslow's theory \(1958\)](#) in 72% of cases in Sardar Jangal County, the income and expenditure are not balanced. 74.5% of the population are often involved in meeting the lowest level of their demands, namely physiological and safety needs. At the same time, the presence of people engaged in informal activities in Tehran and large cities, which often have second homes in the region and show off their prosperous life, has made the local population unmotivated to work and make productive endeavor. Their main concern is not self-transcendence but merely the provision of basic human needs ([Afrakhteh, 2015: 51-61](#)). A community like this cannot be expected to think about long-term development and pursuit of productive activities. Farshad [Momeni \(2017\)](#) asserted that modern industrial production cannot be popularized in society unrealistically; it requires objective institutional tools. In [Bathelt and Glückler view \(2013\)](#) Institutions play two roles in economic activities: incentives and constraints roles that affect action and interaction in spatial economic point of view.

Synthesizing these mentioned above as well as Charles Issawi and the Harvard advisory group's arguments, we can understand the role of context and path-dependency on the direction of economic activity in the region. In other words, the dysfunctional institution structures will not be transformed into inclusive and functional

institution structures without considering the context. Also, [Bathelt \(2006\)](#) argued that the aim and efficiency of actions in human actors are not defined in advance by this presumption that the actors always seek benefits and/or are rational. Rather, businesses are set in relation to specific economic and non-economic goals and strategies, as well as feelings and emotions. The result of this intended action involves intended and unintended consequences, which affect the next round of decisions. Similarly, investment decisions by individuals will be directed to unproductive and rent-seeking activities with rapid return if the quality of institutions is lacking, or they are not functioning well. As a result, investments deviate from production and innovation ([Shirley, 2005](#)).

It can therefore be argued that traditional production, low efficiency, lack of required cultural change, and the dominance of dysfunctional institution structures explain the vicious cycle of underdevelopment and the expanding of unproductive activities in such places.

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#### **Authors' contributions**

The authors equally contributed to the preparation of this article.

#### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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## فعالیت های غیرمولد و عوامل گسترش آن در ایران

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### چکیده مبسوط

#### ۱. مقدمه

فعالیت غیر مولد به فعالیتهایی اطلاق می شود که در تولید ناخالص ملی اثر مثبتی نداشته اما درآمد و بازدهی بالایی در بر دارد. این گونه فعالیت ها اگر از نظام اقتصادی کشور حذف شود، نه تنها آسیبی به کشور نمی رساند بلکه می تواند موجب توسعه فعالیت های مولد شود. در سه دهه اخیر، فعالیت های غیر مولد در اقتصاد ایران ایجاد و گسترش یافته است، این نوع فعالیت، نیازی به تخصص ندارد، ریسک ندارد، تعهدی در قبال جامعه و دولت ندارد. در مقابل، دارای بازدهی بالایی است. به همین دلیل این نوع فعالیت، بخش زیادی از سپرده های بخش خصوصی را به خود جذب کرده و موجب توسعه فعالیت هایی چون خرید و فروش سکه، ارز، زمین و مسکن شده است. چنین فعالیتهایی به دلیل ریسک پذیری ناچیز و کسب سود بالا، گسترش فعالیت های مولد اقتصادی کشور را دچار اختلال کرده است و انگیزه کار و تلاش سازنده و خلق ثروت در کشور را با چالش مواجه ساخته است.

#### ۲. مبانی نظری تحقیق

شناخت فعالیت های نامولد جنبه استقرایی دارد و از روی اثراتی که این نوع فعالیت بر اقتصاد می گذارد، قابل شناسایی است. بنابراین، فعالیت های نامولد را نمی توان از روی قیاس و فرمول مشخص کرد بلکه بر اساس نقشی که در جامعه و تولید ملی ایفاء می کند و به صورت موردی تعریف و شناسایی می شود.

کنش اقتصادی انسان تحت تأثیر عوامل مختلفی قرار دارد. اولین عامل، متن جامعه ای است که فعالیت ها در آن جریان دارد. عامل دوم وابستگی به مسیر است. به این معنی تصمیمات اقتصادی دیروز، زمینه عمل امروزی و آینده را تحت تأثیر قرار می دهد و عامل سوم، اقتضایی بودن کنش اقتصادی است که روندهای اقتصادی به رغم توسعه وابسته به مسیر، موضوع تغییر غیرقابل پیش بینی است و به طور اساسی در سیستم باز عمل می کند. بنابراین سیستم نهادی جامعه، نظام قاعده گذاری و سیستم پاداش ها تعیین کننده روند فعالیت اقتصادی است. در جامعه ای که نظام تصمیم گیری از گسترش فعالیت های مولد پشتیبانی نکند و برعکس، مشوق فعالیت های رانتی و غیر مولد باشد، فعالیت های بخش مولد در اثر عدم توان رقابت حذف می شود و فعالیت های نامولد گسترش می یابد.

#### ۳. روش شناسی تحقیق

ناحیه مورد مطالعه تحقیق، فوتمات از نواحی با سابقه تاریخی گیلان است. استراتژی تحقیق استقرایی با استفاده از رویکرد کیفی است. داده های مورد نیاز تحقیق به دو روش اسنادی و مطالعه میدانی به دست آمده است. اطلاعات مورد نیاز، مراحل مختلف زیر انجام شده است: نخست، با استفاده از داده های اسنادی، تغییرات سهم اشتغال بخش های اقتصادی ناحیه، تغییرات سطح زیر کشت اراضی کشاورزی، و نیز تغییرات سطوح دست ساخت انسانی نشان داده شده است. تا روند تحول فعالیت های مولد مشخص شود؛ دوم، با مراجعه مستقیم و انجام مصاحبه با صاحبان کسب و کارهای مختلف هر خانوار، در روستاهای نمونه که به روش کوچران انتخاب شده است، فعالیت های رایج خانوارها بررسی شده است.

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### ۵. بحث و نتیجه گیری

تحقیق نشان می‌دهد که از یک سو، بین گسترش فعالیت‌های نامولد و بهره‌وری اندک فعالیت‌های تولیدی سنتی رابطه‌ای وجود دارد. فعالیت‌های تولیدی سنتی پرمشقت و کم بازه هستند. اغلب کسانی که در ناحیه از فقر در رنج هستند، کشاورزان و دامدارانی هستند که همیشه مشغول کارند. از سوی دیگر، گسترش فعالیت‌های نامولد با محیط نهادی جامعه رابطه دارد. در جامعه‌ای که به دلیل تسلط ساختار نهادی کُزار، منافع شخصی بر منافع بلندمدت ملی و اجتماعی ترجیح داده می‌شود، هزینه‌های مفت خواری پایین است و برعکس، بخش مولد با انواع نااطمینانی‌های طبیعی و اجتماعی روبروست. فعالیت نامولد رشد کرده و جامعه را در دور باطل توسعه نیافتگی درگیر و دچار آسیب می‌کند.

**کلیدواژه‌ها:** عدم قطعیت، حق مالکیت، سیستم مؤسسه ناکارآمد، فعالیت‌های غیرمولد، فومنات.

### تشکر و قدردانی

پژوهش حاضر حامی مالی نداشته و حاصل فعالیت علمی نویسنده است.

از بین فعالیت‌های رایج، فعالیت‌های غیر مولد به روش بررسی محلی و استقرایی شناسایی شده است؛ جهت درک عوامل مؤثر بر ایجاد و گسترش فعالیت‌های نامولد، از رویکرد کیفی گراند تئوری استفاده شده است.

### ۴. یافته‌های تحقیق

تحقیق نشان می‌دهد که در ناحیه کوهستانی، ۳۹٫۱ درصد مشاغل، در ناحیه پایکوهی، ۳۲٫۳ درصد مشاغل، در ناحیه جلگه‌ای، ۴۱٫۹ درصد مشاغل و در ناحیه ساحلی ۳۰٫۲ درصد مشاغل، از نوع فعالیت‌های غیر مولد قابل ارزیابی است و وجود فضای نااطمینان، عدم حمایت از فعالیت‌های مولد، ضعف حقوق مالکیت، خصوصی‌سازی‌های ناموجه و سیستم نهادی گزارکرد در توسعه فعالیت‌های نامولد در ناحیه مؤثر بوده است که در نهایت به فعالیت‌های تولید و گسترش کار خلاق آسیب می‌رساند.



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